

Central America who are suffering from poverty, fear, violence and repression. Boff regards his work as "experiential", as an attempt to fathom what the cross of Christ has meant in the past and how it can be understood today. He works through the New Testament accounts of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. He looks at the early church's views of the cross; at traditional ways of reflecting on suffering; and then looks at the theological significance of the passion of Christ for today's world. The author takes seriously not only the power and weakness of Christ's humanity but also his historical reality. In the penultimate chapter of the book Boff offers some ideas on how to *preach* the cross of Christ today. In the final chapter he indicates how to *live* the cross of Christ. Although Boff's book is a translation it reads eminently well and is free of jargon.

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CLARK, Francis X.: *An Introduction to the Catholic Church of Asia*. Vol. IX in the Cardinal Bea Studies. Manila: Atenea de Manila University, Loyola School of Theology, 1987. xv + 150 pp. No price quoted.

This is a book which has long been needed. Especially by Protestants. For, as the author says, "No book has yet appeared in English to give a general picture of the Catholic Church in modern Asia." The Asia to which it refers begins in the west with Afghanistan and Pakistan, excludes the USSR, and ends in the east with the continent's island rim, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines and Indonesia.

Clark, an American Jesuit who has served in the Philippines for 50 years, became an Asian himself when in 1977 he took Filipino citizenship. He begins with a composite vignette of Catholics in Asia: only about two and a half percent of the total Asian population compared with 63 % in the Americas, 40 % in Europe, and nearly 13 % in Africa. The only country in Asia with a Catholic majority is the Philippines. Yet already the Asian Catholic Church is a missionary church with more than 3,000 Asian priests and sisters in mission overseas (p. 13). A surprising 80 % of them are sent from India (p. 61).

Catholics define their over-all missionary task in Asia as the building up of the Asian church. But within that broader aim, Clark distinguishes three specific goals. First, to enter into a dialogue of life with Asian religions; second, to inculturate the Christian faith into Asian cultures; and third, to work with Asia's poor toward human dignity for all.

The rest of the book (chapters 4 to 10, and an important Appendix on the relationship between mission and dialogue) describes in greater detail how the church in Asia has responded to these three challenges. Clark gratefully acknowledges the gifts of Asian religions and cultures to the church: spirituality, prayer, religiosity, and cohesive family life. But in terms of mission he points to gifts the church can offer Asia: a deeper meaning to human existence in Christ, Christian prayer, a social conscience about poverty and oppression, respect for individuality and women's rights, and an introduction to the "new world" of the Bible.

Two particular areas to which the church must pay careful attention, he says, are tensions between the local churches of Asia and the Vatican (ecclesiastical, liturgical, and theological), and the encouragement of more Christian Asia creativity, especially in music and art. Clark concludes, in an Appendix, by advocating the elimination of the words (but not the reality) of "mission" and "missionary" in favour of "work" and "co-workers". That question needs more debate.

One of the book's most valuable features is its extensive reference to the important but little-known statements of the Asian Bishops' Meetings from 1970 to 1983. As a Protestant, I confess I would have been helped by a page or two of chronology added to the map of Asian countries on p. xv, and a page of population and membership statistics, for in general we are shamefully ill-informed about the Catholic Church in mission. The use of this small but significant volume could do much to restore our balance, at least about the world's largest continent. It should be on the reading list for all students of missiology.

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see p 175



MISSIONALIA



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